

Counseling God's Way

IV. Foundational Truths for Counseling

Lesson 19 - Spiritual Warfare

By

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[Matthew 10:8](#)

All right, let's pray together again, shall we?

Lord, we give You thanks for Your Word. We thank You that in and through it You can be changing our lives, renewing our minds and that transforms us. We thank You for the many foundational truths there, Lord. And we come again humbly with a sense of need and desire. We ask You to speak to us on this major arena of spiritual warfare that is all around us. And thank You for addressing that in Your Word. We ask You, by Your Spirit, to speak to us now for the developing of our own walk with You and equipping for ministry to others. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The next foundational truth arena is spiritual warfare. In many counseling situations, the difficulties that are there, the issues that prompted a quest for counseling, are often related to spiritual warfare matters. To put it another way, the person is seeking counsel because of the fact that even Christians are involved in a spiritual battle. War is not comfortable, not easy to live in and people often go searching for answers. That is behind much of the counseling situations that we find ourselves in.

By way of introduction look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-4,

For though we walk in the flesh [that is, in human bodies, flesh and bones. For though we walk in the flesh], we do not war according to the flesh.

Obviously it's assumed there that we're at war from verse four—

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

Look at the terminology, war and weapons of our warfare. These are terms that remind us that believers are in a battle. Many Christians are not alert to this fact. Some aren't even aware of this battle. They don't know their enemy or his ways or how to have victory in spiritual warfare. Counseling God's Way, in general and in particular instances of counseling, must address these matters.

The first word here, really, is about our enemy. We do have one. Ephesians 6:11-12,

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age [one translation gives it—“this present darkness”], against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”

Our battle in spiritual warfare is against the devil and his demonic forces of wickedness. Our battle is not essentially, basically against flesh and blood. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood; that is essentially, basically, fundamentally. Oh, that's not to say that people don't get involved in the battle. But when we sense a struggle with people, here's the reality or what's behind it? It is the enemy or the presence of an enemy. It is the devil and all of his hosts, here given in sort of their categories or levels of ranking. Principalities and powers, rulers of the

darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. That's what is causing the battle. That's what's behind the struggle. That's where our battle lies.

Do you remember Ezekiel 28:12-17? There's a lamentation about the king of Tyre. But the language soon goes behind the earthly ruler to the one who is ruling behind him and controlling his life. It uses phrases like him being the "...seal of perfection, perfect in beauty, full of wisdom" (Ezekiel 28:12). It is beginning to speak to that one behind that human instrument. The enemy himself, a very formidable foe, seal of perfection, perfect in beauty, full of wisdom. Wow, quite an enemy. It is actually speaking of the power behind the king of Tyre.

Verse 13 speaks of him as being in Eden. The king of Tyre obviously wasn't there, but the enemy was. But remember he has been created. He was created and verse thirteen speaks of him being created. Verse 14 describes his position in a way that he well could have been the highest of angelic creatures. Ezekiel 28:14, "You *were* the anointed cherub who covers [who protected]. You walked back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones [right there at the fiery altar of God]." Verse 15 blameless, "You *were* perfect in your ways from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you." It was the first expression of sin in creation. Verse 16, he was cast out by God. Verse 17, "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor...."

What is this all about? Pride. The enemy got all caught up in himself. Can't you see why self-exaltation is at the root of all of man's problems? That is why the Lord says, "You want to follow Me?—Deny self. Take up your cross." The cross for self. The first rebellion, the first sin in the universe had to do with self-exaltation.

In Isaiah 14:12-14, there is a similar kind of treatment, same pattern. Addressing the king of Babylon, verse 4, but really it goes far behind the king of Babylon. In verses 13 and 14 Satan gives five powerful "I wills." Look at these. He's the original overwhelming self-asserter. Amazing the churches now teach classes on self-assertion. It's like, what happened to meekness, humility, lowliness? Self-assertion, we're talking things basically satanic in their origin. Look at this:

Isaiah 14:13-14,

...I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation [the place of authority] on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.

Satan, making himself like the Most High. Feeling he was entitled to that place of exaltation and worship and attention. That is self-assertion and self-exaltation. This is probably the first deadly case of self-esteem.

Psychological theory, you can anchor so much of it right here in the "I wills" of Satan. I, ego, psyche. I will. I will. You've got to count on yourself, believe in yourself, make a life for yourself and put yourself forward. No one else will. No, how about put yourself on the cross. Look for a whole new life in Christ. We have an enemy and he was a wondrous creature. But he rebelled against God, asserted and exalted himself. And he's been enticing man to do the same thing ever since. In counseling God's way people need to see that they have a spiritual enemy. And they need to see that they are no match at all for this enemy on their own.

Psychological theory, twelve-step recovery programs, these are not our weapons. Those are weapons of the flesh. Can't you just see Satan shuddering when we come at him quoting Freud. "Oh no, anything but Sigmund! I surrender."
"Oh no, that person is going to recovery group. I've lost them."

Those aren't our weapons. The weapons of our warfare are mighty. They're not carnal they are the weaponry of God. Our enemy is an awesome enemy when you look at it from human perspective. We have an enemy and he is so much greater than we are on our own. Can you imagine throwing human techniques at him? "You get your chains away from that person. They're all right and I'm all right." You know, "I'm okay and you're okay." Can you just see the chains bursting with that kind of philosophy? No way! We'll get that person out of that bondage of despair and helplessness. We'll teach him to highly exalt themselves. Well, we'll call it self-esteem to make it more palatable, clinical and acceptable. Can you see the enemy going, "Oh boy, foiled again." No, he's going, "Oh yes. In fact I'll give you a few ideas how to teach it to him." There are times when the enemy would love to cooperate with the church because the church is cooperating with his program.

Why do some of these programs flourish and all? Well, part of it is that the flesh loves it, and the enemy wants to increase it. Why stand against that which plays right into his hands?

We do have an enemy and it's critical in ministering to people. If we sense they don't know we have an enemy, God's reminding us of something important that He wants to enlighten them with. They need to know the truth. The truth will set them free from that foolish place of thinking that life is a beach. Life is a battlefield, that's what it is. And you can tell by talking to people, they just can't figure out why it's so tough. Christians, they're trying their hardest. They're doing all the right things. What's going on? You want to say, "Someone's out to kill you. Rob, kill and destroy." That's why it's tough! Why can't I get it all together? I'm doing this. I'm doing that. I don't do that. What is the matter? Have you ever thought of warfare? "Warfare? What does that have to do with me?" You live on a battlefield. You can watch battlefields around the world on the news these days. Life's tough on a battlefield. We walk on a battlefield every day as a Christian. We have an enemy. If believers don't know that, if people we're ministering to don't know that, the enemy's got them hoodwinked, immobilized, defeated.

All right, how about his ways? That is, his schemes. In 1 John 5:19. How does he work? The Lord wants us to know it, not to focus in and become, obsessed with the devil. But just so we're alert and not fooled by him because the Lord wants us to follow Himself, the Lord Jesus. And many Christian get distracted and fooled, so the Lord tells us what the enemy is doing to keep us from following the Lord.

In 1 John 5:19, look at this,

We know that we are of God and the whole world lies *under the sway of the* wicked one.

Isn't that amazing? The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. That is, in the power of, or literally, in the lap of. It's like he's holding the world in his lap. Certainly, we know that Satan has the hands of God around over and bigger than him. But the Lord has granted amazing room and access to the enemy and to man who chooses the ways of the enemy. Yes, He can cause "...all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). But the world is under the sway of the evil one, the whole world. That is, all of the unsaved and all of their systems, called the world. It is under the control, the

influence of the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4. All of the unsaved, all of their systems, are influenced by the enemy.

Think of that. The economic systems of the world are influenced by the god of this world. You know, there are Christians out crusading to turn the whole world into capitalism. We're sent to call the world to Jesus, not to capitalism. Sure, God's blessed people through capitalism. And the enemy has cursed people through capitalism, but that isn't the answer. Getting it or staying away from it isn't the key. The economic systems of the world are under the sway of the evil one.

Here's one, the educational systems. Oh yes, come right on to school here. Let's teach you and send Johnny too. And send them as young as you can. In fact, let's get them a head start. See how quick we can get him into this stuff. Get him out of that home. Get him out here where the whole world lies under the sway of the evil one. Let's get him in the education system.

The governmental systems are under the sway of the evil one. Yes, the Lord can turn the heart of the king. But man left to himself, and God often judges man by just giving him what he wants, what he deserves. The wrath of God that's displayed in the second half of Romans 1 is letting man have what man wants. In the first half of Romans 1, the righteousness of God is displayed. The second half, the wrath of God being displayed and it's an ongoing, historical, earthly thing. Letting man have what he wants to judge him for his evil desires. That's governmental systems and religious systems of the world. Oh, there's a big interfaith movement now. You know who's the head of that? Satan. The chairman of the board of the worldwide interfaith movement is Satan. He has no shame. You think he'd stay away from religion. I mean, somehow people might think of God if they think religion. Oh, no problem. You can package that religious thing 78,000 different ways, you know. And keep people from really knowing the true and living God.

The scientific systems of the world, especially how it's all interpreted, "Well, *47 billion* years ago, we can see here that this happened and that, you know." Brilliant. Where does that all come from? The whole world lies in the sway of the evil one. Here's the data and Satan says, "Yeah, and I'll give you the interpretation. I'll let you know what it means."

Communication systems, outside of email I am just exceedingly cautious. What are they doing? They're surfing the cesspool of the world, they are. It's called the world-wide web. Yeah, Satan's web, you know. Oh, it's pathetic what's out there. Now see, God can use it. I mean, we're blessed. I thank God for the internet. Thank God I can use it in the name of the Lord and communicate with a missionary son, pastoring half-way around the world. Take that, Satan! But through all the communication systems, the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one.

I believe the internet, this is going to be the biggest cesspool of wickedness that's ever been trafficked among humanity. They call it the information highway. How about, hell's highway! We can give it a whole lot better names than that. It's astounding what's going to happen there. But television, radio, the whole world lies in the sway of the evil one. Satan is a great broadcaster. He's heavy into TV. He loves it. Radio he can use. But he's kind of limited there because he can't get the images. That's probably why the Gospel has been more effective on the radio, because preacher's flesh is harder to see on the radio.

You think of a verse like this, it's astounding the implications of this. The whole world lies in the sway of the evil one. And people go seek counseling. "I'm having all kinds of trouble. Help me!" And we usher them right into the psychotherapeutic systems of the world. Oh we've Christianized them and the enemy is going, "Oh yes, let's help them together, you know."

Oh we need a radical reformation in this arena. Just from this one verse alone. Our enemy wants to work through all of these avenues to control unbelievers and to undermine, make ineffective and destroy believers. And often people seeking counsel need a word of God's wisdom on this. Hey, life's not a picnic! The ways of the enemy, they are so multitudinous. And many believers are just foolish about it. They don't see them. They don't know the enemy is just lurking everywhere. We don't need to be going under every rock to find him. But just know he's there. Why bother hunting for him. He's around. He's got plenty of henchmen.

1 John 2:15-17,

Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world [You know, they're living for the world], the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life [or as the New American Standard translates the word, the boastful pride of life.]—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

We're not to love the things of the world, crave them, cherish them, pursue them. Do not love all those things out there in the world system and the things, its toys, its rewards, its values, its lifestyle. The church is on such a passionate dash to be "relevant" that it's almost like we don't want them to catch on that we're different. "Let's be so like them that they can come to our church services and go home and they won't even be offended." "Hey, that was pretty good. I think I can go back there." Why? Why bother? For what purpose?

These three channels of earthly enticement our enemy uses to try to defeat us, by the way. Take some time and read the temptation of Eve and the temptation of Jesus. You can trace these three same avenues of enticement in each of those. The enemy, he doesn't have to be clever and new. It's the church that thinks it has to get creative and innovative. The enemy just uses the same old stuff over and over. It worked in the garden, it will work here. It didn't work with Jesus so it doesn't have to work with us. You know, it's pretty simple really.

The lust of the flesh: if it feels good, go for it no matter who says what. The lust of the eyes: if it looks good pursue after it no matter who says what. If it will increase your ego or make you feel better about yourself, if it will give you self adulation, position, self-esteem, self-exaltation, it's great for you. Go for it. And there is the pride of life. Think of this. Can you picture troubled Christians coming to churches for help and they say, "You know, I need you to help me here. I need you to help me, church. My life's hurting and I know the answer is in this arena. You see, I see that my problems are related to the low level of pride of life that I have. And I've heard that you folks in the church now are just about as good as the world in helping me raise my pride of life level."

And you know that churches help them. Oh, they'd never call it "pride of life." What do they call it? Self-esteem. Self-love. That's just a euphemism for pride. Can you imagine, people go to the church of Jesus Christ, already suffering with pride and think that their problem is their pride's too low. Hey, make me feel good about me. I know that's the only way to get out of my problems. How do we learn that? The world taught us that and now the church helps people feel good about themselves. That is, lose any humility they have left. Just feel they're greater and greater and better and better. God is opposed to the proud.

Churches in the name of Jesus counsel troubled people into a place where God must oppose the path they are walking. Is that insanity? That's where we are now. That's how serious these issues

are. They're not just a little less productive than they could be. They are in opposition to what God has taught us.

Oh the enemy is clever! But God is exposed him in the Word. We don't have to be fooled. Yeah, he's amazingly clever until you measure him up to God. Then he's a fool who thought he could rebel against God and get a throne right next to God. How dumb can you be? And yet he is fooling the whole world and major parts of the church world.

Look at 2 Corinthians 11:13-14,

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers [There are such in the church world] transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. [They say they're apostles of Christ, they sound like, look like one] And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms into an angel of light.

One way the enemy deceives people is to get religious leaders, even in the true church, who are deceitful workers, who change what they really are to look like they are servants of Christ, and people get fooled. And no wonder that works. Why? Because even Satan, the epitome of darkness and evil, can appear to be an angel of light, a messenger bringing light. You know, with all these after death experiences, they are "drawn to the light," or "close to the light," or "my trip to the light." You see the enemy back there shining the light, saying, "Here's the way. Here's the way." And Christians get all excited. "Light? They must have seen heaven, right? They saw God. God is light." Not even! The enemy transforms himself. Hey, he pumps up his own false light. What looks like light.

We need to be particularly alert in religious areas. False apostles are around who are deceitful workers disguised. And no wonder, the prince of darkness can do the same.

Oh, the ways of the enemy, they are so many and so varied. And yet the Lord has exposed them. We don't have to be an expert on Satan. Just hear what the Lord says about him and it will alert us. It will let us pursue the Lord, not get distracted off on a rabbit trail thinking we are following after the Lord when it's the enemy going, "Hey, come on. Here's the way to life. Here's the way to abundance. Here's the way to self fulfillment. Here's the way to wholeness. Here's the way to victory." All the while just reeling people in, hooked on lies and deceit.

These remaining verses—Matthew, John, Revelation—in each one there are statements about the enemy of the Lord and His people. Kind of titles that let you know how he works.

Matthew 4:3, the enemy is called "the tempter." He tries to entice us out of God's will and into his ways. It is the tempter enticing people.

In John 8:44, he is called "liar." He wants to get us to believe what is not true. Oh, he's had a great success there in the whole counseling theory approach of the church in the last twenty or thirty years. He's lied to us. We shouldn't have been listening to his genius theoreticians anyway. But he's lied to us and we bought the lies. He's a liar and he lies to people.

A lot of people seeking counseling, are in a mess, in a turmoil, or a torment because the enemy's been lying to them. And they're thinking and acting and feeling as though all of that was the truth. He is a liar. Often just to sit with people and where they are repeating the enemy's lies, just ask God to show us His truth and the truth can set them free from the lies. He is a liar.

In Revelation 12:9-10, a number of terms are used to give insight into the enemy. Let's just read that and pick up a few of those.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and [or it could be translated even] Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.'

He's called the devil, that is, "slanderer." He maligns people's character. Who do you think is the one he wants to malign the most? God. He's the slanderer. He certainly wants to malign the people of God, you and me and others. He loves to malign the character of God, making us think we can't trust God, that He's not loving or faithful.

He's called Satan that means "adversary." He wants to oppose the people of God. He wants to oppose lives. Get in the way, obstruct, limit progress. He deceives the whole world. He loves to trick people. He loves to fool them. He's the accuser of the brethren. He thrives on condemnation. Oh, you are awful and God sure sees it. Oh, God's sick. He's just so fed up with you. That's a lie, a condemning lie. These are characteristic of his tactics. We're not to be ignorant. 2 Corinthians 2:11, "...we are not ignorant of his schemes." Too many believers are ignorant. We don't need to be ignorant. God has exposed him.

In conclusion, 1 Peter 5:8,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

We don't need to panic. We don't need to live in fear. But we should be sober and vigilant. Why? It is because there's an enemy roaming about, an adversary, one who stands against us. Notice he walks or stalks about like a roaring lion. He isn't really a lion. There is a lion, the Lion of Judah and He's ours and we are His. But the enemy, the antichrist, the imitator, he'd like to roar about like a lion. When God really shines a light on him and shows him the perspective between God's might and the enemy's impotence, it's like you know a hundred pound house cat against a three ounce mouse. Now, between us and the enemy, we're the mouse, he's the cat. But we don't ever have to face him that way. It's not intended that we face him on our own. See, here's the truth—We're absolutely no match for him. But he's absolutely no match for our God. So we want to always leave the battle there between the enemy and the Lord.

So we just need to be sober and vigilant, alert. Not goof-offs, paying no attention to what's going on. Just sober and alert because the enemy is prowling about. And look at what he wants to do. He doesn't want to just stub our toe. He's looking for someone to devour. He doesn't want to, give us a hangnail. He wants to eat us alive. So be sober, be vigilant. Just be alert. The devil is prowling.

But we can always keep this kind of truth in mind. 1 John 3:8,

He who sins [that is characteristically, as a way of life] is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Yes, the enemy has mighty works against man, but the Son of God has appeared to destroy the works of the devil. He's done that and is doing that in our lives. He destroyed the devil's grip on us, the devil's claim on us, the devil's hold on us, and the devil's case against us. He destroyed these things. He appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Sure with us against the enemy it is like maybe a mouse against a lion. But that's not the way it is. Our Lord is come to destroy the works of the devil, the destructive enemy, who came to rob, kill and to destroy. Jesus came to destroy that activity. That is why we are redeemed, rescued, set free, and brought back to God, and being built up in Him. Sure, he landed some heavy blows on all of us. His destructive work, we don't have to have great memories to say amen to that. Praise God, Jesus came to destroy those works, the impact that he has on lives, to turn it around the other way.

There are great implications in that. Our Lord is alive and ever able to turn those things around. He's done it in the biggest sense. He brought us out of darkness to light, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, from hell to heaven, from blind to seeing. I mean, oh the Lord has destroyed so many works of the devil for each one of us and He can continue to do that.

In 1 John 4:4, what a critical truth this is to remember,

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because [How do we have overcoming walk as the children of God?] He who is in you [Jesus Christ] is greater than He who is in the world [the god of this age].

That's our hope. We have the Greater One living in us. See, there are not two great gods out there fighting, the god of good and the god of evil. There's only one God, the true and living God. He is the God of righteousness and truth and love. This is a false god, a usurper. This is a creature, not a god. He once did not exist and God made him. Oh yes, made him very special. He gave him a special place of fellowship and service, but he fell in self-exaltation and self-service and self-assertion and self-worship. And now it's a fallen creature that fights against us. Oh, more awesome in his own resources than we are, but we don't have to fight him on our own. We rely on the Greater One who is in us, so much greater than the one in the world.

Spiritual warfare, the enemy, it's a critical part of counseling God's way. We need to be sure that people we are ministering to understand these things or they will just be dominated and chained and fooled otherwise.

But also watch out for the counseling ways of the church world that have come from the world system. You cannot defeat the foe by taking the tactics of the foe and trying to set people free from the foe. We're using psychological theory in the church to try and set people free from the enemy and the enemy's going, "Yes, I invented that. Wail away with it. I love it." And then he tells you, "You're on the right track." No way that it can change people's lives or set them free from his influence.

And all of this is sort of anticipating our next section, and it's about victory in spiritual warfare.